

MINIATURE PINSCHER EVALUATION

By Marcia Tucker

(Published in "Top Notch Toys" February-March 2001)

Can you imagine? A provisional judge faces a huge ring full of 6-9 month Minpin puppy bitches. There are red ones, stag red ones, black and rust and chocolate puppies. Some are close to 12 ½ " in height, others are not much over 10". Not one seems close to the "ideal" 11 to 11 ½" mentioned in the standard. Some appear long-cast, others extremely short-backed and leggy. Worse, not one of them will stand still so you can look at them! They leap, spin and stand on their hind legs. Yes, this is an extreme example, but one faced by many judging this fascinating toy breed for the first time.

Ring procedure is important. Most exhibitors ask that the dogs be moved around the ring once before tabling, as it seems to take the "edge" off those high spirits. They usually won't stand still on the table, so it's best to just use the table to check bite, testicles and for disqualifications such as white spots over ½" and thumb marks on blacks and chocolates. Minpins should be judged on the ground, standing naturally. They should never be "set up" on the floor. Minpins are a clean, short-coated breed, and judges do not need to touch every inch of the dog on the table. Don't reach down to touch a Minpin on the ground; place it back on the table.

Evaluation begins with the Minpin's head, which is in balance with the rest of the body; eyes are dark and slightly oval, and the skull is flat. The muzzle should balance the skull, and the teeth meet in a scissors bite. There is chiseling under the eyes, and underjaw should be present.

The neck is medium-long, arched, and blends into the shoulder cleanly. The angulation in front is a bit less than the rear, which permits the hackney-like gait. Good feet are important. The Minpin should appear square, with a level or slightly sloping topline.

The rear is strong, well muscled and more angulated than the front. The ribs should be well-sprung and the lion short and muscular.

GAIT is extremely important, as it is the factor that sets his breed apart from all the other toys. The standard calls for "hackney-like" action, which is described fully in the standard. In brief, it means there **MUST** be a break at the wrist with each stride, with reach and drive behind. Gait faults are myriad, with some dogs showing no break and no height of stride (Terrier-front); no break with high stepping action (goose-step) and those with correct front action who do not use their rears to drive forward. It is only important that the front wrist break be present, not that it be extreme or high. The gait should always be evaluated from the side, and side gait deemed most important. The "down and back" should be reasonably sound (no crossing over or unsound rears). Minpins with truly outstanding sidegait, in my opinion, will sometimes show slight unsoundness coming and going.

COLOR should not be important. Black/rust and chocolate Minpins should be checked carefully for thumb marks (an "island" of dark hair amid the rust of the forelegs) and sometimes the markings will seem to give a deceptive breadth to the backskull. Otherwise, all colors are judged the same for type and gait. Please remember also that stag red is perfectly legitimate color. Stags show a black overly over the red ground color. Red shades vary from light cream to deep mahogany.

TEMPERAMENT is described in the standard; Minpins are fearless, active, alert and should show these traits in the ring. No Minpin should receive an award with a cowering, tail-down attitude. Tails should be up while standing or gaiting.

Now we return to that big class of puppy bitches....after examining each one briefly on the table, and moving them as a class and individually, you narrow the field down to two... a 12" chocolate bitch, square build, lovely head with self-colored eye, correct movement from the side and front. The second is a stag-red bitch, just under 11", also showing correct movement, but without as much drive in the rear. You bring the two out into the middle of the ring to look at each other. The chocolate bitch strikes a pose, arches her neck and dares you to give her anything but a blue ribbon. Your job is suddenly made easy!